



## U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

### Sweden

#### Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2006](#)

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

March 6, 2007

The Kingdom of Sweden is a constitutional monarchy with a multiparty, parliamentary form of government. Legislative authority is vested in the unicameral Riksdag (parliament). The population exceeds nine million. In national elections on September 17, voters elected a center-right coalition government led by the Moderate Party. The elections were free and fair. The king is the largely symbolic head of state. The prime minister is the head of the government and exercises executive authority. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces.

The government generally respected the human rights of its citizens, and the law and judiciary provided effective means of dealing with individual instances of abuse. Reported human rights problems included: isolated incidents of excessive police violence; prison overcrowding and lengthy pretrial detention; government surveillance and interference with the right to privacy; government interference with freedom of speech and the press; societal anti-Islamic and anti-Semitic discrimination; violence against women and children; trafficking in women and children; and societal discrimination against foreign-born residents, Roma, and homosexuals.

#### RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

##### Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

###### a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

###### b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

###### c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices; however, there were isolated reports that police used excessive force.

During the year law enforcement authorities conducted 82 investigations of police officers and charged and convicted nine for crimes, including unlawful threat, causing bodily injury, and procurement and sexual molestation. The investigation of a September 2005 incident in which police were alleged to have used excessive force did not result in prosecutions due to lack of evidence.

#### Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions generally met international standards, but problems of overcrowding and lengthy pretrial detention continued, particularly in the Stockholm region. Amnesty International released a report during the year citing overcrowding as a concern and noting reports of detainees sharing cells intended for single occupancy. The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture, in a 2004 report, stated that authorities should work to assure a proper balance between the needs of criminal investigations and the restrictions placed on pretrial detainees, such as limitations on visits, telephone calls, and association, and censorship of correspondence. According to the Sweden Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, excessive restrictions on detainees remained problems during the year.

The government permitted visits by independent human rights observers, although no such visits were reported during the year.

###### d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, and the government generally observed these prohibitions.

#### Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

There is a national-level police force divided into 12 districts, each of which reports to a national police board under the jurisdiction of the

Ministry of Justice. The Swedish Security Service (SAPO), an intelligence agency with police duties, is an independent part of the national police board. The SAPO's activities include counterespionage, counterterrorism, internal threats to national security, protective security for companies and government agencies, and dignitary protection. There were no reports of corruption or of problems related to impunity.

#### Arrest and Detention

The law requires warrants issued by duly authorized officials for arrests, and the government generally respected this requirement in practice. Police must file charges within six hours against persons detained for disturbing the public order or considered dangerous, and within 12 hours against those detained on other grounds. Police may hold a person for questioning for six hours, although the period may be extended to 12 hours if necessary for the investigation. If the person is a suspect, police must decide whether to arrest or release the person. If the suspect is arrested, the prosecutor has 24 hours (or three days in exceptional circumstances) to request continued detention. An arrested suspect must be arraigned within 48 hours, and initial prosecution must begin within two weeks, unless extenuating circumstances exist; authorities generally respected these requirements. Detainees may request a lawyer of their choice; in criminal cases the government is obligated to provide an attorney if the defendant cannot afford one. Detainees are afforded prompt access to lawyers and to family members. Although there is no system of bail, courts routinely release defendants pending trial unless they are considered dangerous.

#### e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected this provision in practice.

The judicial system is composed of three levels: district courts, a court of appeals, and the Supreme Court. All cases are heard first in a district court regardless of the severity of the alleged crime. For some areas there are independent specialized courts, such as the labor court, that are usually the second and final instance for trial after the district court. Other specialized courts, for areas such as water and real estate, depend on the district courts; lawsuits in these courts may be appealed to the Supreme Court.

#### Trial Procedures

All trials are public. Juries are used only in cases involving freedom of the press or freedom of speech. In other cases judges or court appointed civilian representatives make determinations of guilt or innocence. The court system distinguishes between civil and criminal cases. Defendants have the right to be present at their trial and to consult with an attorney in a timely manner. In criminal cases, the government is obligated to provide a defense attorney if the defendant cannot afford one. A "free evidence" system allows parties to present in court any evidence, regardless of how it has been acquired. Defendants enjoy a presumption of innocence and have a right of appeal.

#### Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

#### Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is no specific court for human rights violations. Instead, cases are tried in the general court system. As members of the European Union, citizens can appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in matters related to the state. A law that entered into force during the year allows individuals and environmental organizations to appeal in civil cases against the government.

#### f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions in practice. In June the European Court of Human Rights found the country guilty of violating the rights (set forth in the European Convention of Human Rights) of four individuals; it ordered the government to pay damages. The case involved the government's refusal of the individuals' requests to view 30-year-old files the SAPO had gathered on them.

Human rights organizations, including the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, expressed concern over increased use of surveillance techniques by the police and insufficient protection of the individual's right to privacy. During the year courts issued 833, and denied 12, permits for wiretapping.

An ombudsman in the prosecutor's office is responsible for protecting citizens' rights in court cases that involve use of invasive measures, such as camera surveillance or wiretapping. The ombudsman participates in the court review of all wiretapping and surveillance requests.

#### Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

##### a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and of the press. While the government generally respected these rights, it prohibited certain types of expression it deemed hate speech (incitement of racial hatred). The law on hate speech prohibits threats or expressions of contempt for a national, ethnic, or other such group of persons with allusion to race, color, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, or sexual orientation.

The independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views without restriction.

In April the Gota Court of Appeal reversed the conviction and acquitted an individual who had been sentenced in November 2005 to a one-month jail sentence for violating the hate-speech law. He had been prosecuted as the legally responsible publisher of an article concerning homosexuality and another about immigration of Roma from Central Europe.

In connection with anti-Israel demonstrations in July in the city of Malmo, a prosecutor decided that the use of swastikas in conjunction with the equal sign and the star of David on billboards was not illegal. However, also in July, the city's chief prosecutor, Sven-Erik Alhem, requested a preliminary investigation into whether such use of the swastika and the star of David violated the hate-speech law. The investigation was dropped by prosecutorial discretion.

In February a police complaint was filed by Karlskrona municipality against the National Socialist Front for publishing a picture on their Web site where a banner displayed at a demonstration had a swastika on it. The police complaint did not result in a legal case. In a separate matter, in September the chancellor of justice requested that a residential search warrant be issued against one of the founding figures of the National Socialist Front because of his suspected involvement in the distribution of political campaign posters that were deemed to violate the hate-speech law. At the end of the year the chancellor of justice was still pursuing the matter.

In March the National School Authority supported a school in Kungälv municipality that had decided to fail students who did not endorse democratic principles in social studies classes. The decision related to a number of students who expressed racist and neo-Nazi ideas. The municipality based its decision on the national social studies curriculum, which requires students in class nine (approximate age 15) to "understand the common and fundamental democratic values that our society rests upon, and to demonstrate an ability to apply democratic working and decision methods." The National School Authority stated that knowledge and ability, rather than offensive views, should determine school grades. It supported the municipality, however, on the basis that the student behavior failed to meet the requirements of the democratic component of the curriculum.

#### Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet, including e-mail; however, the government monitored the Internet and in one instance intervened to curb the peaceful exchange of views.

In February domestic media gave prominent coverage to the shutting down of a right-wing political party Web site that published cartoons (from a Danish newspaper) lampooning the Muslim prophet Mohammed. The company owning the Internet server hosting the site closed it less than 24 hours after being contacted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the SAPO. The political party owning the site and numerous free-speech advocates from the media and academia held that the government actions constituted a violation of the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of speech and of the press. The government stated that, in light of violent Muslim reaction in other countries to the images, it simply cautioned the Internet server company that the cartoons could endanger the country's interests. The government maintained that the company independently elected to shut down the site. Political analysts viewed this controversy as a contributing factor to the foreign minister's resignation in March.

According to the Swedish National Post and the Swedish National Post and Telecom Agency, approximately 80 percent of the population between 16 and 74 had Internet access.

#### Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

#### b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights.

#### c. Freedom of Religion

The constitution and law provide for freedom of religion, and the government generally respected this right.

The Swedish Commission for State Grants to Religious Communities financed 40 religious groups during the year; a large majority were Christian churches, and the remainder included five Islamic organizations, the Jewish community, and the Buddhist Cooperation Council. During the year a Shia Muslim organization received state financing for the first time.

In March the National Police Board incorporated in the police diversity guidelines the right of officers to wear religious headwear. The armed forces already had such guidelines.

#### Societal Abuses and Discrimination

The openly Nazi organization National Socialist Front Party (NSF) participated in the September elections on both the regional and national levels. The party gained 1,417 votes nationally, representing approximately 0.03 percent of the electorate. During the year the media reported that individuals associated with the NSF perpetrated discriminatory acts. The reports included one case of serious assault and

cases of hate speech (linked to posters and NSF Web site content), unauthorized demonstrations, illegal distribution of posters, illegal possession of weapons, disorderly conduct, and threats against the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights.

Anti-Muslim incidents appeared to have increased during the past few years. In June the Swedish Integration Board released survey results that suggested significant distrust towards Muslims among the country's population. Six out of 10 respondents did not favor facilitating the practice of Islam in the country, and 36 percent of respondents wholly or partly opposed the construction of mosques. Less than a quarter of respondents favored permitting headscarves to be worn in public places, and only 12 percent supported permitting headscarves on identification card pictures. Sixty-one percent of respondents thought that Muslims viewed themselves first and foremost as Muslims, and only a very small proportion thought that Muslims considered themselves primarily Swedish.

A survey released in June by the Swedish Integration Board revealed that a majority of Muslim women wearing headscarves reported incidents of discrimination at least once during the previous two years.

In September and October 2005, unidentified individuals threw firebombs into the Islamic Center's mosque in the city of Malmö; an arson attack had extensively damaged the same mosque in 2003. There have been no arrests in these cases.

The Jewish community numbered approximately 18,500 to 20,000 persons. In 2005 the police registered 111 reports of anti-Semitic crimes, a 26 percent decrease from the previous year. Police classified 33 percent of the reported crimes as "crimes against persons" (including assault, threat, and harassment), 11 percent as "damage to property and graffiti," and 45 percent as "incitements to racial hatred."

In March the National Council for Crime Prevention and the Living History Forum released a survey on anti-Semitism, in which 5 percent of all respondents and 39 percent of those identifying themselves as Muslims indicated strongly anti-Semitic views. In June the Swedish Integration Board issued a report based on interviews with Jewish youth; several respondents considered that they suffered discrimination, and many said they preferred to keep their religious orientation private out of fear of discrimination.

The Living History Forum, a governmental body, conducts research on the country's role during the Holocaust and on its connections to Nazi Germany. The forum also plays a leading role in the country's delegation to the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research (ITF). During the year the forum sponsored educational projects, lectures, seminars, and exhibitions throughout the country. The forum also maintained Holocaust awareness projects in neighboring Estonia under the ITF umbrella.

According to the antiracism nongovernmental organization (NGO) EXPO, anti-Semitic content increased on neo-Nazi Web sites in conjunction with the conflict involving Israel and Lebanon in July and August.

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2006 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

#### d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for these rights, and the government generally respected them in practice.

The constitution and law prohibit forced exile; the government did not employ it.

#### Protection of Refugees

The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice the government provided some protection against refoulement, the return of persons to a country where they feared persecution. The government granted refugee status or asylum.

The government also provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 protocol, and provided it to approximately 4,427 persons during the year. Authorities attributed this number, a significant increase from 2005, to temporary legislation.

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees. In a January visit, the UN's Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health expressed concern that undocumented persons and asylum seekers lacked adequate access to health care.

Applications for asylum could remain under consideration for long periods of time with applicants in uncertain status. The appeals process in the courts may extend cases for several years.

The government returned asylum seekers from European Union (EU)

countries or from countries with which it maintained reciprocal return agreements. In most cases persons returned had passed through or had asylum determinations pending in other EU countries. In many cases authorities deported asylum seekers within 72 hours of arrival. Human rights organizations expressed concern that some asylum cases were adjudicated too quickly.

In April the government established a new appeals system for asylum cases. The system allows asylum seekers to appeal Migration Board rulings to two special migration appeals courts. The government additionally changed certain provisions of the Aliens Act that pertain to children deemed to be in particularly distressing circumstances, lightening the criteria against which their applications are judged. Under the new system, the government appoints a legal guardian immediately upon the arrival of unaccompanied children seeking asylum.

The UN Committee Against Torture received 11 new cases against the government during the year, most of which concerned denial of applications for political asylum and consequent repatriations to countries where victims allegedly faced a risk of torture. During the year the committee ruled on 12 cases and found that in one case the country had violated the rights of the petitioner, a Rwandan citizen who was denied political asylum.

In May 2005 the government stopped the repatriation of an Azeri family at the request of the Committee against Torture. The Migration Board then granted residence in the country.

### Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The constitution and law provide citizens the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercised this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair elections based on universal suffrage.

#### Elections and Political Participation

Elections to the 349-member unicameral parliament are held every four years. In elections held September 17, voters turned the Social Democratic Party (SDP) out of power, electing a center-right coalition government led by the Moderate Party. The SDP had dominated the political system for seven decades, and its members occupied a disproportionately large number of publicly appointed positions. The Swedish Trade Union Confederation continued to provide significant financial and organizational support to the SDP.

There were 165 women in the 349-seat parliament and nine women in the 22 member cabinet.

The law prohibits the government from holding information about the racial or ethnic background of its citizens; therefore, no official statistics on minority participation in the parliament are available. Media reports stated that 17 members of parliament were born in other countries, and there was one ethnic minority in the cabinet.

#### Government Corruption and Transparency

There were isolated reports of corruption in government entities during the year. A bribery investigation against some suppliers and employees of the state-owned alcohol monopoly resulted in 15 convictions in June, with sentences that included fines and dismissal from employment. A court sentenced a midlevel official at the Ministry of Industry to 18 months in prison for fraud linked to a government project. Eight persons at the Aviation Authority received convictions and fines for bribery and fraud. A court convicted and fined six persons at the Swedish Car Testing Agency for bribery. The Swedish National Audit Office stated in a February report that there were substantial gaps in the control mechanisms against corruption within the state. The report called for corrective measures by the government.

The constitution and law provide for public access to government information, and the government generally respected this provision in practice. The public has the right of access to government documents unless they are subject to secrecy laws, according to which information may be withheld if its release poses a threat to national security or to individual or corporate privacy.

### Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

Domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restrictions, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were generally cooperative and responsive to their views.

### Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status. Violence against women and children, trafficking in persons, and discrimination against resident foreigners, Roma, and homosexuals were problems.

#### Women

Violence against women remained a problem. In the first nine months of the year, the National Council for Crime Prevention (NCCP) reported 18,800 cases of assault against women. Approximately 50 homicide deaths of women and girls were reported during the year, most of them committed by men closely related to the victim. Authorities apprehended and prosecuted abusers. The typical sentence for abuse, including felony, was a prison term (three to 15 months on average) or psychiatric treatment.

The law provides victims with protection from contact with their abusers. When necessary, authorities helped women obtain new identities and homes. Both national and local governments helped fund volunteer groups that provided shelter and other assistance to abused women, and both private and public organizations ran shelters and operated hot lines.

Rape, including spousal rape, is illegal. The law stipulates higher sanctions for repeated crimes if the perpetrator had a close relationship to the victim. The NCCP reported 2,226 rapes of persons over age 14 as of September 30, compared with 1,912 for the same period in 2005.

At year's end authorities estimated that approximately 2,000 women had been exposed to honor-related violence (patriarchal violence often linked to cultural and religious convictions about female chastity and marriage) from family members. Honor-related violence involved exclusively immigrants from Muslim countries. The government allocated extra funding to combat honor-related violence against young women and men (including homosexuals). As part of an ongoing project, the government established a national center to study male violence against females. The funding also would support the establishment of additional women's shelters. The government provided protected housing for young women vulnerable to honor related violence from family members.

The law prohibits female genital mutilation (FGM), punishable by up to 10 years' imprisonment. There are nearly 30,000 women from countries where FGM is practiced. Authorities opened three investigations of FGM during the year. The first case, against the father of a 12-year-old girl, resulted in conviction and a four-year prison sentence. In a second case a woman was convicted and sentenced to three years' imprisonment for FGM on her daughter; she left the country before the sentence could be carried out. The other case was pending at year's end.

Prostitution is legal; however, the purchase of sexual services is illegal. Prostitutes were not arrested but their clients were. Since 1999 the government has sought to curb prostitution by focusing on the demand rather than the supply side. In December an official from the National Board of Health and Welfare reported that street prostitution in Stockholm nearly disappeared immediately after the enactment of the 1999 law. However, it had since returned to approximately 70 percent of its pre-1999 levels.

Trafficking in women was a problem (see section 5, Trafficking).

The law prohibits sexual harassment, and the government generally enforced this law in practice. Employers who do not investigate and intervene against harassment at work may be obliged to pay damages to the victim.

Women enjoy the same rights as men, including rights under family law, property law, and in the judicial system, but some sectors of the labor market still showed significant gender disparities. During the year women's salaries averaged 85 percent of men's salaries, adjusting for age, education, and occupational differences.

The equal opportunity ombudsman (EEO), a public official, investigates complaints of gender discrimination in the labor market. Complaints may also be filed with the courts or with the employer. Labor unions generally mediated in cases filed with the employer. During the year the EEO's office registered 134 cases. Women filed approximately 80 percent of the cases; 35 percent of those cases concerned salaries. The number of discrimination complaints related to pregnancy fell to 22, compared with 35 in 2005.

## Children

The government was strongly committed to children's rights and welfare; it amply funded systems of public education and medical care. The government provided compulsory, free, and universal education for children up to 16 years old. It provided free, but not compulsory, public school for children up to 18 years old. Nearly 100 percent of school-age children attended school. The highest level achieved by most children was completion of high school.

The government also provided free medical care for all children up to the age of 16; boys and girls had equal access.

Child abuse was a problem. As of the end of November, the NCCP reported 6,192 cases of abuse of children under the age of 15. As of the end of November, police reported 848 cases of child rape and 654 cases of sexual abuse of children, compared with 537 reported cases of rape and 1,089 reported cases of child sexual abuse in 2005.

The law prohibits parents or other caretakers from abusing children mentally or physically in any way. Parents, teachers, and other adults are subject to prosecution if they physically punish a child, including slapping or spanking. Children have the right to report such abuses to the police. The usual sentence for such an offense is a fine combined with counseling and monitoring by social workers. Authorities may remove children from their homes and place them in foster care.

Trafficking of children was a problem (see section 5, Trafficking).

The government allocated funds to private organizations concerned with children's rights. The NGO Children's Rights in Society offered counseling to troubled youngsters. The government continued to be active internationally in efforts to prevent child abuse.

In an effort to improve its treatment of unaccompanied children seeking asylum, the government shifted responsibility from the national to the municipal level, and increased funding to support municipalities for this purpose. Most social services are provided at the municipal and local levels.

## Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits trafficking in persons; however, there were reports that persons were trafficked to, through, and within the country.

The country continued to be a transit point, and to a lesser extent a destination, for trafficked women and children. Law enforcement officials and analysts estimated the number of trafficked women at 500 per year, cautioning, however, that it was not possible to obtain precise numbers. Victims came primarily from the Baltic region, Eastern Europe, and Russia. Those transiting the country came primarily from the Baltic region, heading towards suspected destination countries of Denmark, Germany, Norway, Spain, and the United Kingdom. There were also occasional cases of trafficked women from South America and Thailand. Police reported that the youngest trafficking victims encountered were 16 years old. Most of these children were trafficked from Estonia, Russia, and Poland. None of the cases involved young boys.

Traffickers typically recruited victims in their countries of origin to work as cleaners, babysitters, or in similar employment abroad. Once in the country, traffickers isolated and intimidated victims, and forced them to work as prostitutes in hotels, restaurants, massage parlors, or private apartments; some were locked up and their passports were confiscated by their captors.

The law prohibits the trafficking of persons for sexual purposes, provides for sentences of two to 10 years' imprisonment for persons convicted of trafficking, and criminalizes attempting to traffic, conspiracy to traffic, and the failure to report such crimes. Authorities actively prosecuted trafficking cases. During the year police reported 28 cases of trafficking for sexual purposes, nine of which led to convictions under the trafficking law in the first half of the year.

To prosecute traffickers, authorities continued to use primarily laws against procurement and an offense called "placing in distress," which can apply in cases where traffickers lure women from other countries under false pretenses. The laws on procurement and trafficking complement each other; however, the antitrafficking law requires that prosecutors prove traffickers used "improper means." Judges commonly ruled that improper means were absent in cases involving victims who consented to being trafficked. Although consent is irrelevant under the antitrafficking law, in practice judicial interpretation of the improper means criterion makes it difficult to obtain convictions. Prosecutors consequently continued to rely on the procurement laws for most convictions of traffickers. During the year there were 58 cases of procurement reported, many involving trafficking victims.

In June authorities convicted, and sentenced to two years in prison, a Chinese immigrant couple in Stockholm for human smuggling in connection with the disappearance of not less than 120 Chinese children who had requested political asylum in Sweden since autumn 2004. Authorities reported that the children were smuggled out of the country to other European countries, but were unaware of their final destinations. After that conviction an additional five Chinese children disappeared during the year.

The government allocated funds to domestic and international NGOs to provide shelter to victims and aid in rehabilitation. Police and social services also provided funding. The law enables trafficking victims who cooperate with police investigations to receive temporary residence permits and thus to have access to the full range of social benefits. Victims who do not cooperate with police investigations are not eligible to receive temporary residence permits and are promptly deported.

The country has actively participated in a Nordic-Baltic task force against trafficking in human beings since its creation in 2002. In October 2005 it contributed \$1.25 million to a Nordic-Baltic task force project for the safe return and reintegration of victims of trafficking.

In June the government appointed a special ambassador to combat trafficking in human beings, tasked with strengthening international antitrafficking efforts. The country declared antitrafficking a priority area during its year-long presidency of the Council of Baltic Sea States that began in July.

#### Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits employers from discriminating against persons with disabilities in hiring decisions and prohibits universities from discriminating against students with disabilities in making admissions decisions. No other specific law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. There is an ombudsman for disability issues.

There were 522 reports of governmental discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or in the provision of other state services. Most of the cases involved lack of access to public buildings. Approximately 60 percent of the cases were filed in accordance with the reporting requirements under the Disability Act and were handled under mediation procedures rather than through formal court hearings. Four of these mediated cases remained pending at year's end.

Regulations for new buildings require full accessibility, but there is no such requirement for existing public buildings, except for certain public entities that are obliged to make their facilities accessible. Many buildings and some means of public transportation remained inaccessible.

In January a new national Authority for Coordination of Disability Policy began operation. The authority coordinates national policy on disability issues.

On April 1, a new law on children with disabilities came into force. This law provides protections against harassment in schools for children with disabilities.

#### National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Approximately 12 percent of the population was foreign born, with the largest groups from Finland, the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Iran. Over 20 percent of the population had at least one foreign-born parent. In 2005 police registered 2,272 reports of xenophobic crimes, of which 11.3 percent were related to neo-Nazism/white power ideology. The government investigated and prosecuted race-related crimes.

Estimates placed the number of active neo-Nazis, or white supremacists, at approximately 3,000. The NGO EXPO estimated that fewer than 1,000 individuals attended the annual neo-Nazi/white supremacist march that took place in Salem in December, constituting approximately a 30 percent decrease in attendance from the 2005 march. Neo-Nazi groups operated legally, but courts have held that it is illegal to wear xenophobic symbols or racist paraphernalia or to display signs and banners with provocative symbols at rallies, since the law prohibits incitement of hatred against ethnic groups (see section 2.a.).

The ombudsman for ethnic discrimination received reports of 876 cases in 2005, up from 794 in 2004.

A March report by the National Board of Health and Welfare indicated that increasing numbers of persons, particularly those who were foreign born, remained outside both the labor market and the social insurance systems. The board considered that ethnic segregation has increased, particularly in the large cities, since the 1990s.

In April the Swedish Integration Board presented its 2005 Integration Report, key findings of which noted significant differences in employment levels between native and foreign-born citizens. The report noted employment rates for foreign-born citizens averaged 17 percent lower than those for ethnic Swedes; the employment rate for foreign-born, young, non-European males was worse. It found the resultant income differentials were contributing factors to housing segregation and to poor grades in school.

Also in April the government presented a 10-point program for improving integration. It budgeted approximately \$281 million (two billion crowns) for this two-year program. Key program areas include education, employment, and antidiscrimination.

In August the government-appointed investigator presented the final report of the inquiry on power, integration, and structural discrimination. The report criticized the government's integration policy, and called for its replacement with one that promotes greater social cohesion. The report's author, Masoud Kamali, maintained that a system of privilege based on ethnicity now existed in the country. It called for a shift of government emphasis away from integrating immigrants and towards combating discrimination.

The law recognizes Sami (formerly known as Lapps), Swedish Finns, Tornedal Finns, Roma, and Jews as national minorities. The government supported and protected minority languages. In January, in response to a 2003 Council of Europe report that criticized government efforts to protect minority languages, a parliamentary committee presented findings that included suggestions to improve support for the Sami and Meankili languages. In February the government presented a series of proposals to strengthen the Sami language. The government also proposed expansion of Sami-controlled administrative areas, construction of additional Sami language centers, and the establishment of a government coordination secretariat for Sami and national minority policies. It stated that all Sami children must be given the opportunity to learn Sami.

In March the government's national action plan for human rights included measures to improve the situation of the Romani population, which is estimated at 20,000 to 25,000. It directed the school authority to investigate the education situation of Romani children, many of whom drop out of school. In May, following reports by the antidiscrimination ombudsman of cases in which Romani children were taken into state custody on weak grounds, the government instructed the Ministry of Justice to investigate the care of Romani children by the social authorities.

In June 2005 the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights released a report, *The Situation of Roma in Selected Western European Countries*, which stated that Roma in the country suffered from discrimination and institutional racism. It found that Roma lived in segregated communities, had limited access to public and private housing markets, and authorities did not adapt public education to special needs of Romani children. The Living History Forum, a government authority, carried out a number of lectures and seminars on the situation of the Roma and highlighted their suffering in the Holocaust.

#### Indigenous People

There are 17,000 to 20,000 Sami in the country. Longstanding tensions between Sami and the government over land and natural resources persisted, as did tensions between Sami and private landowners over reindeer grazing rights. Courts repeatedly ruled that Sami must compensate private landowners for use of their land for winter pastures.

In May parliament enacted legislation that transferred numerous administrative authorities for reindeer herding issues from the Ministry of Agriculture and county governments to the Sami parliament, a 31-member, Sami-elected administrative authority with decision-making powers in matters related to Sami culture, language, and schools. The Sami parliament acted as an advisory body to the government.

In August the government opened a permanent national Sami Information Center.

#### Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Societal violence and discrimination against homosexuals was a problem. In 2005 police received reports of 563 crimes with homophobic motive, an 8 percent decrease from 2004. The ombudsman against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation registered 45 reported cases during the year, compared with 47 cases in 2005. Additionally, the ombudsman's office initiated 11 new discrimination investigations, a decrease from 15 in 2005. In September the government formed a working group to promote equal rights for homosexuals, bisexuals, and transsexuals. The group advises government offices on how to improve its handling of related matters.

#### Section 6 Worker Rights

#### a. The Right of Association

The law entitles workers to form and join unions of their choice, without previous authorization or excessive requirements, and workers exercised this right in practice. Approximately 80 percent of the workforce was unionized. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination.

#### b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows unions to conduct their activities without interference, and the government protected this right in practice. The law provides for collective bargaining, and workers exercised this right in practice. Approximately 80 percent of the workforce was under collective bargaining agreements. The law provides for the right to strike, as well as for employers to organize and to conduct lockouts; workers and employers exercised these rights in practice. Public-sector employees also enjoy the right to strike, subject to limitations protecting the public's immediate health and security.

There are no export processing zones.

#### c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children, and there were no reports that such practices occurred.

#### d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law and policies (including those on acceptable working conditions) protect children from exploitation in the workplace, and the government effectively implemented these laws and policies in practice. The law permits full-time employment at age 16 under the supervision of local authorities. Employees under age 18 may work only during the daytime and under supervision. Children as young as 13 may work part time or in light work with parental permission. Union representatives, police, and public prosecutors effectively enforced these restrictions.

#### e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

There is no national minimum wage law. Wages are set by annual collective bargaining contracts. Nonunion establishments generally observed these contracts as well. Substantial benefits (e.g., housing, childcare) provided by social welfare entitlement programs assured even the lowest-paid workers and their families a decent standard of living. Foreign companies employing workers from their country of origin at wage levels below minimums stipulated in domestic collective-bargaining contracts created frictions in the labor market. For example, a 2005 incident in which Swedish workers blocked Latvian workers from access to a work site in Vaxholm resulted in a court case that was pending in the European Court at year's end. The Swedish union contended that the construction workers did not have collective bargaining agreements with a Swedish union.

The legal standard workweek is 40 hours or less. Both the law and collective bargaining agreements regulate overtime and rest periods. The maximum allowable overtime per year is 200 hours. The law requires a minimum period of 36 consecutive hours of rest, preferably on weekends, during a period of seven days. The law also provides employees with a minimum of five weeks' paid annual leave. The government effectively enforced these standards.

The Work Environment Authority, a government appointed board, issued occupational health and safety regulations, and trained union stewards and safety ombudsmen. Government inspectors monitored them. Safety ombudsmen have the authority to stop unsafe activity immediately and to call in an inspector. These rules were effectively enforced. Work places were generally safe and healthy. In law and practice, workers could remove themselves from situations that endangered their health or safety without jeopardizing their future employment.